Radiant Church, December 17, 2017

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**Be a Magnifier**

**Christmas through the Eyes of the Shepherds**

**Luke 2:8-20**

Luke 2:8 *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

A shepherd was usually the youngest brother in a family

The oldest brother usually followed the father’s profession

Therefore, older brother enjoyed much more time with Dad

If a king were to announce his arrival, the last people to be first to hear would be the lowest of society, like the shepherds were

A shepherd’s testimony was not considered admissible in a court of law

Shepherd’s were considered to lack integrity; not to be trusted

Ancient people considered the job to be an indicator of ethics and morals

But God’s Kingdom is an upside down Kingdom

Luke 2:9 *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*

God’s glory is so beyond what any of us can imagine:

There is a sense of its “over-ness,” its “above-ness,” its “beyond-ness”

The idea of “filled with great fear” is the words “phobeo phobos”

They were “fearing with a great fear”

We live in great fear. We’re born with that fear. We come by it naturally

Genesis 3:8 *And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

We’re afraid of God’s glory, because the light of that glory exposes the darkness in our own hearts

If we love that darkness, we should be afraid of the light

Luke 2:10-12*And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”*

We want to hear from God, and we want to hear it from someone who has authority, like an angel.

Most of the time, we hear from God through shepherds…and shepherds always have flaws, which is why our initial response may be to discount the messenger

Luke 2:13-14 *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.”*

“Glory to God” is a way of saying “not my glory”

None of us can really worship God, if we’re worshipping ourselves at the same time

Luke 2:15 *When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”*

For them to want to leave and visit the Christ child, the promised Messiah, was to suggest they abandon their post, to be derelict in their duties, to put themselves and their families at financial risk

It doesn’t talk about the shepherds needing directions. Chances are, they knew exactly where that cave was that had a manger in it. Families that owned sheep shared the use of caves in the colder months to house their sheep. They might have gone right to the cave that their families owned.

But they wanted to go, because they wanted to see the face of God

And this is what our God who created us, has always wanted us to do…

2 Chronicles 7:14 *if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

Hosea 5:15 *I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me*

A survey by Forbes Magazine in 2011 found that 59% of executives increased the use of virtual, video meetings…but that 80% of executives expressed preference for face-to-face meetings

Seeking God’s face is to finally turn away from our darkness, our sin and the excuses and justifications we make for our sin, and instead to turn to face him

This means a radical change. We willingly reorient our lives around greater priorities that give us much greater hope

You may ask, How do I seek God’s face?

We seek and find Him in Scripture

If all of Scripture, as Jesus said, points to Him

Then we have a high view of Scripture

And we devote ourselves to Scripture

And we seek and find Him in prayer

Pastor and writer, John Piper, said this about prayer:

Both microscopes and telescopes make things larger

But more often we pray using a microscope

Making small things in our lives big

We should instead pray using a telescope

Making really big and far away things small enough for us to

Comprehend

When we pray to God with a shopping list, we’re ultimately making

ourselves big

When we pray, motivated primarily to seek God’s face, so that His

glory is more real and more relevant to us, we’re making Him

big

And, we can seek God’s face, even in looking at other people

We can emphasize what we don’t see of God in other people

Or we can emphasize what we do see of God in other people

And this is why Jesus called us to live and worship Him in community

So together, we can seek His face, His presence, His glory

Luke 2:16-19 *And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.*

Mary “treasured” up all these things: memorized, contemplated

Luke 2:20 *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

What God does, especially in sending His Son into our world, is ultimately for His deserved glory.

The shepherds could only respond in one way to what they’d seen…they gave God the glory due His name, because they had seen His face

So as Jesus-followers, and Christians we look for the face of God

John 20:29 *Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known*

Psalm 4:6-8 *There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

**Benediction**

Numbers 6:24-26 *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord life up his countenance upon you and give you peace*